

Message Text

PAGE 01 STATE 165971
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TO AMEMBASSY PRETORIA IMMEDIATE
INFO AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN
AMCONSUL DURBAN
AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG
AMEMBASSY LONDON
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AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY VIENNA

UNCLAS STATE 165971

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SUBJECT: ARTICLES ON US-SOUTH AFRICAN NUCLEAR TALKS

1. BOTH NEW YORK TIMES AND WASHINGTON POST CARRIED ARTICLES
JUNE 29 ON US-SOUTH AFRICAN NUCLEAR TALKS. TEXTS OF AR-
TICLES FOLLOW.

2. NEW YORK TIMES BY JOHN F. BURNS: JOHANNESBURG, JUNE 28
--AMERICAN EFFORTS TO PERSUADE SOUTH AFRICA TO SIGN THE
TREATY BANNING THE SPREAD OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS REPORTEDLY
REACHED AN ADVANCED STAGE TODAY AS HIGH-LEVEL OFFICIALS OF
THE TWO GOVERNMENTS ENDED TALKS IN PRETORIA ON THE NUCLEAR
ISSUE.

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PAGE 02 STATE 165971

SOURCES CLOSE TO THE TALKS DISCLOSED TONIGHT THAT GERARD C.
SMITH, PRESIDENT CARTER'S AMBASSADOR AT LARGE IN CHARGE OF
EFFORTS TO PREVENT THE SPREAD OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS, HAD BEEN
IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN CAPITAL OF PRETORIA SINCE SUNDAY FOR
DISCUSSIONS WITH FOREIGN MINISTER ROELOF F. BOTHA AND OTHER
SENIOR OFFICIALS, INCLUDING ABRAHAM J. ROUX, CHAIRMAN OF
THE SOUTH AFRICAN ATOMIC ENERGY BOARD.

(REPORTS FROM WASHINGTON INDICATED, MEANWHILE, THAT SOUTH
AFRICA WAS CONSIDERING SIGNING THE TREATY AND WAS

PREPARED TO ACCEPT STRICTER
INTERNATIONAL CONTROLS TO PREVENT ITS ATOMIC ENERGY PROGRAM
FROM BEING USED TO DEVELOP WEAPONS.)

NEITHER SIDE IN THE PRETORIA TALKS WOULD DIVULGE ANY DETAILS OF WHAT WENT ON OR SAY WHETHER AN AGREEMENT WAS IN PROSPECT. HOWEVER, IT IS KNOWN THAT MR SMITH, A 68-YEAR-OLD VETERAN OF ARMS-LIMITATION TALKS, ARRIVED HERE WITH THE AIM OF GAINING SOUTH AFRICAN ACCESSION TO THE NUCLEAR TREATY IN RETURN FOR A PLEDGE OF CONTINUED COOPERATION BETWEEN THE TWO GOVERNMENTS IN THE PEACEFUL APPLICATIONS OF NUCLEAR ENERGY.

THE TALKS IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN CAPITAL ARE THE CULMINATION OF SECRET NEGOTIATIONS THAT BEGAN LAST YEAR, AFTER A DIPLOMATIC FLURRY OVER FEARS THAT SOUTH AFRICA WAS PREPARING TO TEST A NUCLEAR EXPLOSIVE. THE FEARS AROSE AFTER SOVIET AND AMERICAN SPY SATELLITES HAD SPOTTED WHAT ANALYSTS TOOK FOR AN ATOMIC TESTING FACILITY IN THE KALAHARI DESERT, 400 MILES WEST OF JOHANNESBURG. SOUTH AFRICA, HOWEVER, HEATEDLY DENIED ANY PLANS TO ACQUIRE OR TEST NUCLEAR WEAPONS.

SOUTH AFRICA, ONE OF SEVERAL NATIONS WITH A NUCLEAR WEAPONS
UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 03 STATE 165971

POTENTIAL THAT HAVE NOT SIGNED THE 1968 TREATY TO HALT THE SPREAD OF SUCH ARMS, HAS DEMANDED GUARANTEES THAT THE UNITED STATES WILL HONOR CONTRACTS FOR THE SUPPLY OF NUCLEAR FUELS TO THE SAFARI-1 RESEARCH REACTOR OUTSIDE PRETORIA AND TO THE COUNTRY'S FIRST NUCLEAR POWER PLANT, DUE TO GO INTO OPERATION OUTSIDE CAPE TOWN IN 1982. FUEL SHIPMENTS FOR THE RESEARCH REACTOR, CONSISTING OF WEAPONS-GRADE URANIUM, WERE SUSPENDED IN LATE 1976.

THE SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT HAS ALSO SOUGHT A PLEDGE FROM WASHINGTON THAT TECHNOLOGY AND EQUIPMENT WILL BE MADE AVAILABLE FOR THE URANIUM ENRICHMENT PLANT AT THE VALINDABA RESEARCH ESTABLISHMENT NEAR PRETORIA. EARLIER THIS YEAR, THE GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCED THAT IT HAD SCRAPPED A \$1.5 BILLION PLAN FOR A FULL-SCALE COMMERCIAL PLANT, AND INSTEAD WOULD EXPAND THE EXISTING PILOT PLANT INTO A MODEST-SIZED COMMERCIAL UNIT. MUCH OF THE FOREIGN EQUIPMENT NEEDED FOR THE EXPANSION IS MANUFACTURED IN THE UNITED STATES.

AFTER A TIP LAST YEAR FROM LEONID I. BREZHNEV, THE SOVIET LEADER, ABOUT SOVIET SIGHTINGS OF ACTIVITIES IN THE KALAHARI DESERT, A UNITED STATES RECONNAISSANCE SATELLITE PHOTOGRAPHED A CLUSTER OF SHEDS AND OTHER BUILDINGS AROUND A PROMINENT TOWER, ALONG WITH ANOTHER HEAVILY REINFORCED STRUCTURE NEARBY. THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION, CONVINCED THAT THE PHOTOGRAPHS SHOWED A NUCLEAR TEST SITE, REPORTEDLY THREATENED TO BREAK DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS IF A TEST WAS

CARRIED OUT.

ON AUG. 23, PRESIDENT CARTER ANNOUNCED AT A NEWS CONFERENCE THAT SOUTH AFRICA HAD TOLD THE UNITED STATES THAT IT HAD NO INTENTION OF DEVELOPING NUCLEAR EXPLOSIVES, EITHER FOR PEACEFUL OR WEAPONS PURPOSES, AND THAT THE KALAHARI SITE WAS NOT INTENDED FOR TESTING NUCLEAR DEVICES. SUBSEQUENTLY, PRIME MINISTER JOHN VORSTER DENIED HAVING GIVEN MR. CARTER ANY PROMISES, BUT REITERATED PAST SOUTH AFRICAN PLEDGES THAT ITS NUCLEAR PROGRAM WAS "FOR PEACEFUL PURPOSES ONLY."

PAGE 04 STATE 165971

POSES ONLY."

SUSPICIONS THAT SOUTH AFRICA MIGHT BE DEVELOPING NUCLEAR WEAPONS WERE AROUSED LONG BEFORE THE KALAHARI SCARE, IN PART BY THE SOUTH AFRICANS' RELUCTANCE TO SIGN THE NON-PROLIFERATION TREATY, UNDER WHICH NATIONS NOT IN POSSESSION OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS RENOUNCED THE RIGHT TO ACQUIRE THEM AND AGREED TO OPEN ALL THEIR NUCLEAR FACILITIES TO INTERNATIONAL INSPECTION.

OVER THE YEARS, SENIOR OFFICIALS HAVE HINTED THAT THE WHITE MINORITY GOVERNMENT WISHED TO RESERVE THE RIGHT TO DEVELOP NUCLEAR WEAPONS AS A LAST RESORT AGAINST EXTERNAL PRESSURES TO CEDE TO BLACK RULE. BUT THE FORMAL ARGUMENT AGAINST SIGNING THE NUCLEAR TREATY HAS BEEN THAT THE INTERNATIONAL INSPECTIONS REQUIRED UNDER THE TREATY WOULD EXPOSE THE SECRETS OF THE COUNTRY'S URANIUM ENRICHMENT PROCESS TO PIRATING BY OTHER NATIONS, DESTROYING THE COMMERCIAL VIABILITY OF THE UNDERTAKING.

THE ENRICHMENT METHOD, IN PROCESS SINCE THE MID-1960'S, IS A DEVELOPMENT OF A TECHNIQUE PIONEERED BY A WEST GERMAN SCIENTIST, ERWIN BACKER. MR. ROUX, HEAD OF THE ATOMIC ENERGY BOARD, HAS SAID THAT THE SOUTH AFRICAN PROCESS IS UNIQUE AND CHEAPER THAN SYSTEMS USED ELSEWHERE. IN 1975, WHEN PLANS FOR A FULL-SCALE ENRICHMENT PLANT WERE ANNOUNCED IN PARLIAMENT, OFFICIALS ESTIMATED THAT IT COULD BRING THE COUNTRY AN ADDITIONAL \$400 MILLION TO \$500 MILLION A YEAR FROM URANIUM SALES, WHICH CURRENTLY ARE IN RAW FORM.

THE PILOT ENRICHMENT PLANT, IN A HOLLOW AT THE TOP OF THE MOUNTAIN RANGE KNOWN AS MAGALIESBERG WEST OF THE CAPITAL, IS OFF LIMITS TO ALL BUT A FEW DOZEN TRUSTED SOUTH AFRICANS. IN AN INTERVIEW LAST YEAR, MR. ROUX ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THE PLANT COULD BE USED FOR THE PRODUCTION OF WEAPONS-GRADE URANIUM, BUT SAID THAT IT WAS NOT LARGE ENOUGH IN PILOT FORM TO DO SO. PRIVATELY, SOME SOUTH AFRICAN

PAGE 05 STATE 165971

CANS. IN AN INTERVIEW LAST YEAR, MR. ROUX ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THE PLANT COULD BE USED FOR THE PRODUCTION OF WEAPONS-GRADE URANIUM, BUT SAID THAT IT WAS NOT LARGE ENOUGH IN PILOT FORM TO DO SO. PRIVATELY, SOME SOUTH AFRICAN

SCIENTISTS BELIEVE THAT THE PLANT MAY ALREADY HAVE PRODUCED BOMB-GRADE URANIUM IN SMALL QUANTITIES.

WASHINGTON POST BY MILTON R. BENJAMIN: THE UNITED STATES AND SOUTH AFRICA ARE ENGAGED IN INTENSIVE NEGOTIATIONS WHICH THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION HOPES WILL RESULT IN SOUTH AFRICAN AGREEMENT--PERHAPS BY THE END OF THE WEEK--TO SIGN THE NUCLEAR NONPROLIFERATION TREATY.

U.S. AMBASSADOR GERARD C. SMITH, THE ADMINISTRATION'S TOP NEGOTIATOR OF NUCLEAR AGREEMENTS, ARRIVED IN PRETORIA SUNDAY TO OPEN SECRET TALKS WITH SOUTH AFRICAN LEADERS. HIS PRESENCE IN SOUTH AFRICA BECAME KNOWN YESTERDAY.

SOUTH AFRICAN AGREEMENT TO SIGN THE TREATY--WHICH FORMALLY COMMITS NONNUCLEAR WEAPON STATES NOT TO BUILD NUCLEAR EXPLOSIVES, AND TO ACCEPT MANDATORY INTERNATIONAL SAFEGUARDS ON ALL THEIR PEACEFUL NUCLEAR FACILITIES--WOULD REPRESENT A DRAMATIC TRIUMPH FOR NONPROLIFERATION EFFORTS.

THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION HAS BEEN PARTICULARLY ANXIOUS TO PERSUADE SOUTH AFRICA TO SIGN THE NONPROLIFERATION TREATY IN VIEW OF THE HIGHLY PUBLICIZED SCARE LAST AUGUST OVER INDICATIONS THAT SOUTH AFRICA MIGHT BE PREPARING TO TEST A NUCLEAR WEAPON.

SOUTH AFRICA DENIED ANY INTENTION OF PRODUCING OR TESTING A NUCLEAR DEVICE, BUT MOST EXPERTS BELIEVE SOUTH AFRICA HAS THE ABILITY TO BUILD NUCLEAR WEAPONS--IF IT HAS NOT ALREADY DONE SO.

NEITHER U.S. NOR SOUTH AFRICAN OFFICIALS WOULD PROVIDE ANY UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 06 STATE 165971

DETAILS YESTERDAY OF THE NEGOTIATIONS NOW UNDER WAY. A.J.A. ROUX, PRESIDENT OF SOUTH AFRICA'S ATOMIC ENERGY BOARD, TERMED THE TALKS "TOO IMPORTANT AND TOO SENSITIVE" TO DISCUSS.

BUT INFORMED SOURCES SAID SMITH WAS TRYING TO WORK OUT AN ARRANGEMENT UNDER WHICH SOUTH AFRICA WOULD PROMISE TO SIGN THE TREATY IN RETURN FOR U.S. AGREEMENT TO PROVIDE FUEL FOR SOUTH AFRICA'S NUCLEAR RESEARCH AND POWER REACTORS.

WHILE SOME SOURCES SUGGESTED THAT A FINAL AGREEMENT MIGHT NOT BE CONCLUDED THIS WEEK, THEY NOTED THAT THE ADMINISTRATION'S DECISION TO SEND SMITH--WHO NEGOTIATED THE FIRST STRATEGIC ARMS LIMITATIONS PACT WITH THE SOVIET UNION--ATTESTED TO THE ADVANCED STATE OF THE TALKS.

OFFICIALS ALSO OBSERVED THAT THE UNITED STATES IS NOT WITHOUT LEVERAGE IN THIS AFFAIR.

THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION HAS BEEN STALLING EVER SINCE IT TOOK OFFICE ON SUPPLYING A SHIPMENT OF 57 POUNDS OF HIGHLY ENRICHED WEAPONS-GRADE URANIUM THAT SOUTH AFRICA NEEDS FOR

ITS SAFARI I NUCLEAR RESEARCH REACTOR AT PELINDABA, JUST WEST OF PRETORIA.

SOUTH AFRICA HAS ALSO BEEN INFORMED THAT U.S. FIRMS WILL NOT BE ALLOWED TO PROVIDE THE SLIGHTLY ENRICHED URANIUM HEXAFLUORIDE NEEDED TO OPERATE TWO NUCLEAR POWER PLANTS NOW UNDER CONSTRUCTION OUTSIDE CAPE TOWN UNLESS PRETORIA SIGNS THE TREATY.

SOUTH AFRICAN PRIME MINISTER JOHN VORSTER HAS REPEATEDLY UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 07 STATE 165971

STATED THAT HIS COUNTRY IS ONLY "INTERESTED IN THE PEACEFUL APPLICATIONS OF NUCLEAR POWER," AND OFFICIALS HAVE ALSO STRESSED THAT SOUTH AFRICA DOES NOT OBJECT TO THE PRINCIPLE OF NONPROLIFERATION.

BOTH PRETORIA'S OBJECTIONS TO THE TREATY--AND THE CONCERN IN THE UNITED STATES AND OTHER COUNTRIES OVER SOUTH AFRICA'S NUCLEAR PROGRAM--HAVE CENTERED ON SOUTH AFRICA'S SECRET URANIUM ENRICHMENT PLANT AT PELINDABA.

THE SMALL EXPERIMENTAL PLANT, WHICH WAS COMPLETED IN 1976, IS PRESENTLY CAPABLE OF ENRICHING SMALL AMOUNTS OF URANIUM USING A NEW PROCESS SOUTH AFRICA DEVELOPED.

THE FACILITY IS CURRENTLY NOT SUBJECT TO INTERNATIONAL SAFEGUARDS OR INSPECTION BY THE INTERNATIONAL ATOMIC ENERGY AGENCY. WHILE IT IS NOT KNOWN WHETHER WEAPONS-GRADE URANIUM CAN BE--OR IS BEING--PRODUCED AT PELINDABA, AT PRESENT, SOUTH AFRICA EARLIER THIS YEAR ANNOUNCED PLANS TO CONVERT THE FACILITY INTO A PLANT CAPABLE OF PRODUCING ENRICHED URANIUM IN COMMERCIAL QUANTITIES.

THE UNITED STATES WANTS TO SEE THE PELINDABA ENRICHMENT PLANT PLACED UNDER "FULL-SCOPE" SAFEGUARDS THAT WOULD ALLOW SOUTH AFRICA TO PRODUCE ENRICHED URANIUM FOR POWER PLANTS, BUT PREVENT PRODUCTION OF WEAPONS-GRADE URANIUM.

SOUTH AFRICA, ON THE OTHER HAND, EXPRESSES CONCERN THAT IF IT OPENS UP ITS ENRICHMENT PLANT TO INTERNATIONAL INSPECTION, THE "UNIQUE" PROCESS IT DEVELOPED MAY BE STOLEN.

WHILE SOUTH AFRICA HAS LONG INTENDED TO OPERATE THE TWO NUCLEAR POWER PLANTS NOW UNDER CONSTRUCTION WITH FUEL PRODUCED AT ITS OWN ENRICHMENT FACILITY, THE COMMERCIAL ENRICHMENT PLANT ORIGINALLY ENVISAGED WAS NOT EXPECTED TO GO

INTO COMMERCIAL OPERATION UNTIL THE MID-1980'S.
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PAGE 08 STATE 165971

SINCE THE TWO FRENCH-BUILT POWER PLANTS WILL BE COMPLETED
BY 1981, SOUTH AFRICA HOPED TO OBTAIN FUEL FROM THE UNITED
STATES FOR AT LEAST THE FIRST THREE YEARS OF OPERATION.
SOUTH AFRICA'S DECISION EARLIER THIS YEAR TO CONVERT THE
PELINDABA PLANT INTO A COMMERCIAL FACILITY--RATHER THAN
BUILD A NEW ENRICHMENT PLANT--WAS VIEWED AS DESIGNED TO
SPEED UP PRODUCTION OF FUEL NEEDED FOR THE POWER REACTORS.

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